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SORCERERS OF ANTIQUITY AN INTRODUCTION

Don Juan stressed, time and time again, that everything he was teaching me had been envisioned and worked out by men he referred to as sorcerers of antiquity. He made it very clear that there was a profound distinction between those sorcerers and the sorcerers of modern times. He categorized sorcerers of antiquity as men who existed in Mexico perhaps thousands of years before the Spanish Conquest, men whose greatest accomplishment had been to build the structures of sorcery, emphasizing practicality and concreteness. He rendered them as men who were brilliant but lacking in wisdom. Modern sorcerers, by contrast, don Juan portrayed as men renowned for their sound minds and their capacity to rectify the course of sorcery if they deemed it necessary.

Don Juan explained to me that the sorcery premises pertinent to dreaming were naturally envisioned and developed by sorcerers of antiquity. Out of necessity-for those premises are key in explaining and understanding dreaming-I again have to write about and discuss them. The major part of this book is, therefore, a reintroduction and amplification of what I have presented in my previous works.

During one of our conversations, don Juan stated that, in order to appreciate the position of dreamers and dreaming, one has to understand the struggle of modern-day sorcerers to steer sorcery away from concreteness toward the abstract.

"What do you call concreteness, don Juan?" I asked.

"The practical part of sorcery," he said. "The obsessive fixation of the mind on practices and techniques, the unwarranted influence over people. All of these were in the realm of the sorcerers of the past."

"And what do you call the abstract?"

"The search for freedom, freedom to perceive, without obsessions, all that's humanly possible. I say that present-day sorcerers seek the abstract because they seek freedom; they have no interest in concrete gains. There are no social functions for them, as there were for the sorcerers of the past. So you'll never catch them being the official seers or the sorcerers in residence."

"Do you mean, don Juan, that the past has no value to modern-day sorcerers?"

"It certainly has value. It's the taste of that past which we don't like. I personally detest the darkness and morbidity of the mind. I like the immensity of thought. However, regardless of my likes and dislikes, I have to give due credit to the sorcerers of antiquity, for they were the first to find out and do everything we know and do today."

Don Juan explained that their most important attainment was to perceive the energetic essence of things. This insight was of such importance that it was turned into the basic premise of sorcery. Nowadays, after lifelong discipline and training, sorcerers do acquire the capacity to perceive the essence of things, a capacity they call *seeing*.

"What would it mean to me to perceive the energetic essence of things?" I once asked don Juan.

"It would mean that you perceive energy directly," he replied. "By separating the social part of perception, you'll perceive the essence of everything. Whatever we are perceiving is energy, but since we can't directly perceive energy, we process our perception to fit a mold. This mold is the social part of perception, which you have to separate."

"Why do I have to separate it?"

"Because it deliberately reduces the scope of what can be perceived and makes us believe that the mold into which we fit our perception is all that exists. I am convinced that for man to survive now, his perception must change at its social base."

"What is this social base of perception, don Juan?"

"The physical certainty that the world is made of concrete objects. I call this a social base because a serious and fierce effort is put out by everybody to guide us to perceive the world the way we do."

"How then should we perceive the world?"

"Everything is energy. The whole universe is energy. The social base of our perception should be the physical certainty that energy is all there is. A mighty effort should be made to guide us to perceive energy as energy. Then we would have both alternatives at our fingertips."

"Is it possible to train people in such a fashion?" I asked.

Don Juan replied that it was possible and that this was precisely what he was doing with me and his other apprentices. He was teaching us a new way of perceiving, first, by making us realize we process our perception to fit a mold and, second, by fiercely guiding us to perceive energy directly. He assured me that this method was very much like the one used to teach us to perceive the world of daily affairs.

Don Juan's conception was that our entrapment in processing our perception to fit a social mold loses its power when we realize we have accepted this mold, as an inheritance from our ancestors, without bothering to examine it.

"To perceive a world of hard objects that had either a positive or a negative value must have been utterly necessary for our ancestors' survival," don Juan said. "After ages of perceiving in such a manner, we are now forced to believe that the world is made up of objects."

"I can't conceive the world in any other way, don Juan," I complained. "It is unquestionably a world of objects. To prove it, all we have to do is bump into them."

"Of course it's a world of objects. We are not arguing that."

"What are you saying then?"

"I am saying that this is first a world of energy; then it's a world of objects. If we don't start with the premise that it is a world of energy, we'll never be able to perceive energy directly. We'll always be stopped by the physical certainty of what you've just pointed out: the hardness of objects."

His argument was extremely mystifying to me. In those days, my mind would simply refuse to consider any way to understand the world except the one with which I was familiar. Don Juan's claims and the points he struggled to raise were outlandish propositions that I could not accept but could not refuse either.

"Our way of perceiving is a predator's way," he said to me on one occasion. "A very efficient manner of appraising and classifying food and danger. But this is not the only way we are able to perceive. There is another mode, the one I am familiarizing you with: the act of perceiving the essence of everything, energy itself, directly."

"To perceive the essence of everything will make us understand, classify, and describe the world in entirely new, more exciting, more sophisticated terms." This was don Juan's claim. And the more sophisticated terms to which he was alluding were those he had been taught by his predecessors, terms that correspond to sorcery truths, which have no rational foundation and no relation whatsoever to the facts of our daily world but which are self-evident truths for the sorcerers who perceive energy directly and *see* the essence of everything.

For such sorcerers, the most significant act of sorcery is to *see* the essence of the universe.

Don Juan's version was that the sorcerers of antiquity, the first ones to *see* the essence of the universe, described it in the best manner. They said that the essence of the universe resembles incandescent threads stretched into infinity in every conceivable direction, luminous filaments that are conscious of themselves in ways impossible for the human mind to comprehend.

From *seeing* the essence of the universe, the sorcerers of antiquity went on to *see* the energy essence of human beings. Don Juan stated that they depicted human beings as bright shapes that resembled giant eggs and called them luminous eggs.

"When sorcerers *see* a human being," don Juan said, "they *see* a giant, luminous shape that floats, making, as it moves, a deep furrow in the energy of the earth, just as if the luminous shape had a taproot that was dragging."

Don Juan had the impression that our energy shape keeps on changing through time. He said that every seer he knew, himself included, *saw* that human beings are shaped more like balls or even tombstones than eggs. But, once in a while, and for no reason known to them, sorcerers *see* a person whose energy is shaped like an egg. Don Juan suggested that people who are egglike in shape today are more akin to people of ancient times.

In the course of his teachings, don Juan repeatedly discussed and explained what he considered the decisive finding of the sorcerers of antiquity. He called it the crucial feature of human beings as luminous balls: a round spot of intense brilliance, the size of a tennis ball, permanently lodged inside the luminous ball, flush with its surface, about two feet back from the crest of a person's right shoulder blade.

Since I had trouble visualizing this the first time don Juan described it to me, he explained that the luminous ball is much larger than the human body, that the spot of intense brilliance is part of this ball of energy, and that it is located on a place at the height of the shoulder blades, an arm's length from a person's back. He said that the old sorcerers named it the assemblage point after *seeing* what it does.

"What does the assemblage point do?" I asked.

"It makes us perceive," he replied. "The old sorcerers *saw* that, in human beings, perception is assembled there, on that point. *Seeing* that all living beings have such a point of brilliance, the old sorcerers surmised that perception in general must take place on that spot, in whatever pertinent manner."

"What did the old sorcerers *see* that made them conclude that perception takes place on the assemblage point?" I asked.

He answered that, first, they *saw* that out of the millions of the universe's luminous energy filaments passing through the entire luminous ball, only a small number pass directly through the assemblage point, as should be expected since it is small in comparison with the whole. Next, they *saw* that a spherical extra glow, slightly bigger than the assemblage point, always surrounds it, greatly intensifying the luminosity of the filaments passing directly through that glow.

Finally, they *saw* two things. One, that the assemblage points of human beings can dislodge themselves from the spot where they are usually located. And, two, that when the assemblage point is on its habitual position, perception and awareness seem to be normal, judging by the normal behavior of the subjects being observed. But when their assemblage points and surrounding glowing spheres are on a different position than the habitual one, their unusual behavior seems to be the proof

that their awareness is different, that they are perceiving in an unfamiliar manner.

The conclusion the old sorcerers drew from all this was that the greater the displacement of the assemblage point from its customary position, the more unusual the consequent behavior

and, evidently, the consequent awareness and perception.

"Notice that when I talk about *seeing*, I always say 'having the appearance of or 'seemed like/' don Juan warned me. "Everything one *sees* is so unique that there is no way to talk about it except by comparing it to something known to us."

He said that the most adequate example of this difficulty was the way sorcerers talk about the assemblage point and the glow that surrounds it. They describe them as brightness, yet it cannot be brightness, because seers *see* them without their eyes. They have to fill out the difference, however, and say that the assemblage point is a spot of light and that around it there is a halo, a glow. Don Juan pointed out that we are so visual, so ruled by our predator's perception, that everything we *see* must be rendered in terms of what the predator's eye normally sees.

After *seeing* what the assemblage point and its surrounding glow seemed to be doing, don Juan said that the old sorcerers advanced an explanation. They proposed that in human beings the assemblage point, by focusing its glowing sphere on the universe's filaments of energy that pass directly through it, automatically and without premeditation assembles those filaments into a steady perception of the world.

"How are those filaments you talk about assembled into a steady perception of the world?" I asked.

"No one can possibly know that," he emphatically replied. "Sorcerers *see* the movement of energy, but just *seeing* the movement of energy cannot tell them how or why energy moves." Don Juan stated that, *seeing* that millions of conscious energy filaments pass through the assemblage point, the old sorcerers postulated that in passing through it they come together, amassed by the glow that surrounds it. After *seeing* that the glow is extremely dim in people who have been rendered unconscious or are about to die, and that it is totally absent from corpses, they were convinced that this glow is awareness. "How about the assemblage point? Is it absent from a corpse?" I asked.

He answered that there is no trace of an assemblage point on a dead being, because the assemblage point and its surrounding glow are the mark of life and consciousness. The inescapable conclusion of the sorcerers of antiquity was that awareness and perception go together and are tied to the assemblage point and the glow that surrounds it.

"Is there *a* chance that those sorcerers might have been mistaken about their *seeing*?" I asked. "I can't explain to you why, but there is no way sorcerers can be mistaken about their *seeing*," don Juan said, in a tone that admitted no argument. "Now, the conclusions they arrive at from their *seeing* might be wrong, but that would be because they are naive, uncultivated. In order to avoid this disaster, sorcerers have to cultivate their minds, in whatever form they can."

He softened up then and remarked that it certainly would be infinitely safer for sorcerers to remain solely at the level of describing what they *see*, but that the temptation to conclude and explain, even if only to oneself, is far too great to resist.

The effect of the assemblage point's displacement was another energy configuration the sorcerers of antiquity were able to *see* and study. Don Juan said that when the assemblage point is displaced to another position, a new conglomerate of millions of luminous energy filaments come together on that point. The sorcerers of antiquity *saw* this and concluded that since the glow of awareness is always present wherever the assemblage point is, perception is automatically assembled there. Because of the different position of the assemblage point, the resulting world, however, cannot be our world of daily affairs.

Don Juan explained that the old sorcerers were capable of distinguishing two types of assemblage point displacement. One was a displacement to any position on the surface or in

the interior of the luminous ball; this displacement they called a *shift* of the assemblage point. The other was a displacement to a position outside the luminous ball; they called this displacement a *movement* of the assemblage point. They found out that the difference between a shift and a movement was the nature of the perception each allows.

Since the shifts of the assemblage point are displacements within the luminous ball, the worlds engendered by them, no matter how bizarre or wondrous or unbelievable they might be, are still worlds within the human domain. The human domain is the energy filaments that pass through the entire luminous ball. By contrast, movements of the assemblage point, since they are displacements to positions outside the luminous ball, engage filaments of energy that are beyond the human realm. Perceiving such filaments engenders worlds that are beyond comprehension, inconceivable worlds with no trace of human antecedents in them.

The problem of validation always played a key role in my mind in those days. "Forgive me, don Juan," I said to him on one occasion, "but this business of the assemblage point is an idea so farfetched, so inadmissible that I don't know how to deal with it or what to think of it."

"There is only one thing for you to do," he retorted. "*See* the assemblage point! It isn't that difficult to *see*. The difficulty is in breaking the retaining wall we all have in our minds that holds us in place. To break it, all we need is energy. Once we have energy, *seeing* happens to us by itself. The trick is in abandoning our fort of self-complacency and false security."

"It is obvious to me, don Juan, that it takes a lot of knowledge to *see*. It isn't just a matter of having energy."

"It is just a matter of having energy, believe me. The hard part is convincing yourself that it can be done. For this, you need to trust the nagual. The marvel of sorcery is that every sorcerer has to prove everything with his own experience. I am telling you about the principles of sorcery not with the hope that you will memorize them but with the hope that you will practice them."

Don Juan was certainly right about the need for trusting. In the beginning stages of my thirteen-year apprenticeship with him, the hardest thing for me was to affiliate myself with his world and his person. This affiliating meant that I had to learn to trust him implicitly and accept him without bias as the nagual.

Don Juan's total role in the sorcerers' world was synthesized in the title accorded to him by his peers; he was called the *nagual*. It was explained to me that this concept refers to any person, male or female, who possesses a specific kind of energy configuration, which to a seer appears as a double luminous ball. Seers believe that when one of these people enters into the sorcerers' world, that extra load of energy is turned into a measure of strength and the capacity for leadership. Thus, the nagual is the natural guide, the leader of a party of sorcerers.

At first, to feel such a trust for don Juan was quite disturbing to me, if not altogether odious. When I discussed it with him, he assured me that to trust his teacher in such a manner had been just as difficult for him.

"I told my teacher the same thing you are saying to me now," don Juan said. "He replied that without trusting the nagual there is no possibility of relief and thus no possibility of clearing the debris from our lives in order to be free."

Don Juan reiterated how right his teacher had been. And I reiterated my profound disagreement. I told him that being reared in a stifling religious environment had had dreadful effects on me, and that his teacher's statements and his own acquiescence to his teacher reminded me of the obedience dogma that I had to learn as a child and that I abhorred. "It sounds like you're voicing a religious belief when you talk about the nagual," I said.

"You may believe whatever you want," don Juan replied undauntedly. "The fact remains, there is no game without the nagual. I know this and I say so. And so did all the naguals who preceded me. But they didn't say it from the standpoint of self-importance, and neither do I. To say there is no path without the nagual is to refer totally to the fact that the man, the nagual, is a nagual because he can reflect the abstract, the spirit, better than others. But that's all. Our link is with the spirit itself and only incidentally with the man who brings us its message."

I did learn to trust don Juan implicitly as the nagual, and this, as he had stated it, brought me an immense sense of relief and a greater capacity to accept what he was striving to teach me. In his teachings, he put a great emphasis on explaining and discussing the assemblage point. I asked him once if the assemblage point had anything to do with the physical body.

"It has nothing to do with what we normally perceive as the body," he said. "It's part of the luminous egg, which is our energy self."

"How is it displaced?" I asked.

"Through energy currents. Jolts of energy, originating outside or inside our energy shape. These are usually unpredictable currents that happen randomly, but with sorcerers they are very predictable currents that obey the sorcerer's intent."

"Can you yourself feel these currents?"

"Every sorcerer feels them. Every human being does, for that matter, but average human beings are too busy with their own pursuits to pay any attention to feelings like that."

"What do those currents feel like?"

"Like a mild discomfort, a vague sensation of sadness followed immediately by euphoria. Since neither the sadness nor the euphoria has an explainable cause, we never regard them as veritable onslaughts of the unknown but as unexplainable, ill-founded moodiness."

"What happens when the assemblage point moves outside the energy shape? Does it hang outside? Or is it attached to the luminous ball?"

"It pushes the contours of the energy shape out, without breaking its energy boundaries."

Don Juan explained that the end result of a movement of the assemblage point is a total change in the energy shape of a human being. Instead of a ball or an egg, he becomes something resembling a smoking pipe. The tip of the stem is the assemblage point, and the bowl of the pipe is what remains of the luminous ball. If the assemblage point keeps on moving, a moment comes when the luminous ball becomes a thin line of energy.

Don Juan went on to explain that the old sorcerers were the only ones who accomplished this feat of energy shape transformation. And I asked him whether in their new energetic shape those sorcerers were still men.

"Of course they were still men," he said. "But I think what you want to know is if they were still men of reason, trustworthy persons. Well, not quite."

"In what way were they different?"

"In their concerns. Human endeavors and preoccupations had no meaning whatsoever to them. They also had a definite new appearance."

"Do you mean that they didn't look like men?"

"It's very hard to tell what was what about those sorcerers. They certainly looked like men. What else would they look like? But they were not quite like what you or I would expect. Yet if you pressed me to tell in what way they were different, I would go in circles, like a dog chasing its tail."

"Have you ever met one of those men, don Juan?"

"Yes, I have met one."

"What did he look like?"

"As far as looks, he looked like a regular person. Now, it was his behavior that was unusual."

"In what way was it unusual?"

"All I can tell you is that the behavior of the sorcerer I met is something that defies the imagination. But to make it a matter of merely behavior is misleading. It is really something you must see to appreciate."

"Were all those sorcerers like the one you met?"

"Certainly not. I don't know how the others were, except through sorcerers' stories handed down from generation to generation. And those stories portray them as being quite bizarre."

"Do you mean monstrous?"

"Not at all. They say that they were very likable but extremely scary. They were more like unknown creatures. What makes mankind homogeneous is the fact that we are all luminous balls. And those sorcerers were no longer balls of energy but lines of energy that were trying to bend themselves into circles, which they couldn't quite make."

"What finally happened to them, don Juan? Did they die?"

"Sorcerers' stories say that because they had succeeded in stretching their shapes, they had also succeeded in stretching the duration of their consciousness. So they are alive and conscious to this day. There are stories about their periodic appearances on the earth."

"What do you think of all this yourself, don Juan?"

"It is too bizarre for me. I want freedom. Freedom to retain my awareness and yet disappear into the vastness. In my personal opinion, those old sorcerers were extravagant, obsessive, capricious men who got pinned down by their own machinations."

"But don't let my personal feelings sway you. The old sorcerers' accomplishment is unparalleled. If nothing else, they proved to us that man's potentials are nothing to sneeze at." Another topic of don Juan's explanations was the indispensability of energetic uniformity and cohesion for the purpose of perceiving. His contention was that mankind perceives the world we know, in the terms we do, only because we share energetic uniformity and cohesion. He said that we automatically attain these two conditions of energy in the course of our rearing and that they are so taken for granted we do not realize their vital importance until we are faced with the possibility of perceiving worlds other than the world we know. At those moments, it becomes evident that we need a new appropriate energetic uniformity and cohesion to perceive coherently and totally.

I asked him what uniformity and cohesion were, and he explained that man's energetic shape has uniformity in the sense that every human being on earth has the form of a ball or an egg. And the fact that man's energy holds itself together as a ball or an egg proves it has cohesion. He said that an example of a new uniformity and cohesion was the old sorcerers' energetic shape when it became a line: every one of them uniformly became a line and cohesively remained a line. Uniformity and cohesion at a line level permitted those old sorcerers to perceive a homogeneous new world.

"How are uniformity and cohesion acquired?" I asked.

"The key is the position of the assemblage point, or rather the fixation of the assemblage point," he said.

He did not want to elaborate any further at that time, so I asked him if those old sorcerers could have reverted to being egglike. He replied that at one point they could have, but that they did not. And then the line cohesion set in and made it impossible for them to go back. He believed that what really crystallized that line cohesion and prevented them from making the journey back was a matter of choice and greed. The scope of what those sorcerers were able to perceive and do as lines of energy was astronomically greater than what an average man or any average sorcerer can do or perceive.

He explained that the human domain when one is an energy ball is whatever energy filaments

pass through the space within the ball's boundaries. Normally, we perceive not all the human domain but perhaps only one thousandth of it. He was of the opinion that, if we take this into consideration, the enormity of what the old sorcerers did becomes apparent; they extended themselves into a line a thousand times the size of a man as an energy ball and perceived all the energy filaments that passed through that line.

On his insistence, I made giant efforts to understand the new model of energy configuration he was outlining for me. Finally, after much pounding, I could follow the idea of energy filaments inside the luminous ball and outside it. But if I thought of a multitude of luminous balls, the model broke down in my mind. In a multitude of luminous balls, I reasoned, the energy filaments that are outside one of them will perforce be inside the adjacent one. So in a multitude there could not possibly be any energy filaments outside any luminous ball.

"To understand all this certainly isn't an exercise for your reason," he replied after carefully listening to my arguments. "I have no way of explaining what sorcerers mean by filaments inside and outside the human shape. When seers *see* the human energy shape, they *see* one single ball of energy. If there is another ball next to it, the other ball is *seen* again as a single ball of energy. The idea of a multitude of luminous balls comes from your knowledge of human crowds. In the universe of energy, there are only single individuals, alone, surrounded by the boundless.

"You must *see* that for yourself!"

I argued with don Juan then that it was pointless to tell me to *see* it for myself when he knew I could not. And he proposed that I borrow his energy and use it to *see*. "How can I do that? Borrow your energy."

"Very simple. I can make your assemblage point shift to another position more suitable to perceiving energy directly."

This was the first time, in my memory, that he deliberately talked about something he had been doing all along: making me enter into some incomprehensible state of awareness that defied my idea of the world and of myself, a state he called the second attention. So, to make my assemblage point shift to a position more suitable to perceiving energy directly, don Juan slapped my back, between my shoulder blades, with such a force that he made me lose my breath. I thought that I must have fainted or that the blow had made me fall asleep. Suddenly, I was looking or I was dreaming I was looking at something literally beyond words. Bright strings of light shot out from everywhere, going everywhere, strings of light which were like nothing that had ever entered my thoughts.

When I recovered my breath, or when I woke up, don Juan expectantly asked me, "What did you *see*?" And when I answered, truthfully, "Your blow made me see stars," he doubled up laughing.

He remarked that I was not ready yet to comprehend any unusual perception I might have had. "I made your assemblage point shift," he went on, "and for an instant you were dreaming the filaments of the universe. But you don't yet have the discipline or the energy to rearrange your uniformity and cohesion. The old sorcerers were the consummate masters of that rearranging. That was how they *saw* everything that can be *seen* by man." "What does it mean to rearrange uniformity and cohesion?" "It means to enter into the second attention by retaining the assemblage point on its new position and keeping it from sliding back to its original spot."

Don Juan then gave me a traditional definition of the second attention. He said that the old sorcerers called the result of fixing the assemblage point on new positions the second attention and that they treated the second attention as an area of all-inclusive activity, just as the attention of the daily world is. He pointed out that sorcerers really have two complete

areas for their endeavors: a small one, called the first attention or the awareness of our daily world or the fixation of the assemblage point on its habitual position; and a much larger area, the second attention or the awareness of other worlds or the fixation of the assemblage point on each of an enormous number of new positions.

Don Juan helped me to experience inexplicable things in the second attention by means of what he called a sorcerer's maneuver: tapping my back gently or forcefully striking it at the height of my shoulder blades. He explained that with his blows he displaced my assemblage point. From my experiential position, such displacements meant that my awareness used to enter into a most disturbing state of unequaled clarity, a state of superconsciousness, which I enjoyed for short periods of time and in which I could understand anything with minimal preambles. It was not quite a pleasing state. Most of the time it was like a strange dream, so intense that normal awareness paled by comparison.

Don Juan justified the indispensability of such a maneuver, saying that in normal awareness a sorcerer teaches his apprentices basic concepts and procedures and in the second attention he gives them abstract and detailed explanations.

Ordinarily, apprentices do not remember these explanations at all, yet they somehow store them, faithfully intact, in their memories. Sorcerers have used this seeming peculiarity of memory and have turned remembering everything that happens to them in the second attention into one of the most difficult and complex traditional tasks of sorcery.

Sorcerers explain this seeming peculiarity of memory, and the task of remembering, saying that every time anyone enters into the second attention, the assemblage point is on a different position. To remember, then, means to relocate the assemblage point on the exact position it occupied at the time those entrances into the second attention occurred. Don Juan assured me not only that sorcerers have total and absolute recall but that they relive every experience they had in the second attention by this act of returning their assemblage point to each of those specific positions. He also assured me that sorcerers dedicate a lifetime to fulfilling this task of remembering. In the second attention, don Juan gave me very detailed explanations of sorcery, knowing that the accuracy and fidelity of such instruction will remain with me, faithfully intact, for the duration of my life.

About this quality of faithfulness he said, "Learning something in the second attention is just like learning when we were children. What we learn remains with us for life. 'It's second nature with me,' we say when it comes to something we've learned very early in life."

Judging from where I stand today, I realize that don Juan made me enter, as many times as he could, into the second attention in order to force me to sustain, for long periods of time, new positions of my assemblage point and to perceive coherently in them, that is to say, he aimed at forcing me to rearrange my uniformity and cohesion.

I succeeded countless times in perceiving everything as precisely as I perceive in the daily world. My problem was my incapacity to make a bridge between my actions in the second attention and my awareness of the daily world. It took a great deal of effort and time for me to understand what the second attention is. Not so much because of its intricacy and complexity, which are indeed extreme, but because, once I was back in my normal awareness, I found it impossible to remember not only that I had entered into the second attention but that such a state existed at all.

Another monumental breakthrough that the old sorcerers claimed, and that don Juan carefully explained to me, was to find out that the assemblage point becomes very easily displaced during sleep. This realization triggered another one: that dreams are totally associated with that displacement. The old sorcerers *saw* that the greater the displacement, the more unusual

the dream or vice versa: the more unusual the dream, the greater the displacement. Don Juan said that this observation led them to devise extravagant techniques to force the displacement of the assemblage point, such as ingesting plants

that can produce altered states of consciousness; subjecting themselves to states of hunger, fatigue, and stress; and especially controlling dreams. In this fashion, and perhaps without even knowing it, they created dreaming.

One day, as we strolled around the plaza in the city of Oaxaca, don Juan gave me the most coherent definition of dreaming from a sorcerer's standpoint.

"Sorcerers view dreaming as an extremely sophisticated art," he said, "the art of displacing the assemblage point at will from its habitual position in order to enhance and enlarge the scope of what can be perceived."

He said that the old sorcerers anchored the art of dreaming on five conditions they *saw* in the energy flow of human beings.

One, they *saw* that only the energy filaments that pass directly through the assemblage point can be assembled into coherent perception.

Two, they *saw* that if the assemblage point is displaced to another position, no matter how minute the displacement, different and unaccustomed energy filaments begin to pass through it, engaging awareness and forcing the assembling of these unaccustomed energy fields into a steady, coherent perception.

Three, they *saw* that, in the course of ordinary dreams, the assemblage point becomes easily displaced by itself to another position on the surface or in the interior of the luminous egg.

Four, they *saw* that the assemblage point can be made to move to positions outside the luminous egg, into the energy filaments of the universe at large.

And, five, they *saw* that through discipline it is possible to cultivate and perform, in the course of sleep and ordinary dreams, a systematic displacement of the assemblage point.

THE FIRST GATE OF DREAMING

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_ a preamble to his first lesson in dreaming, don Juan talked about the second attention as a progression: beginning as an idea that comes to us more like a curiosity than an actual possibility; turning into something that can only be felt, as a sensation is felt; and finally evolving into a state of being, or a realm of practicalities, or a preeminent force that opens for us worlds beyond our wildest fantasies.

When explaining sorcery, sorcerers have two options. One is to speak in metaphorical terms and talk about a world of magical dimensions. The other is to explain their business in abstract terms proper to sorcery. I have always preferred the latter, although neither option will ever satisfy the rational mind of a Western man.

Don Juan told me that what he meant by his metaphorical description of the second attention as a progression was that, being a by-product of a displacement of the assemblage point, the second attention does not happen naturally but must be intended, beginning with intending it as an idea and ending up with intending it as a steady and controlled awareness of the assemblage point's displacement.

"I am going to teach you the first step to power," don Juan said, beginning his instruction in the art of dreaming. "I'm going to teach you how to set up dreaming."

"What does it mean to set up dreaming?"

"To set up dreaming means to have a precise and practical command over the general situation of a dream. For example, you may dream that you are in your classroom. To set up dreaming means that you don't let the dream slip into something else. You don't jump from

the classroom to the mountains, for instance. In other words, you control the view of the classroom and don't let it go until you want to."

"But is it possible to do that?"

"Of course it's possible. This control is no different from the control we have over any situation in our daily lives. Sorcerers are used to it and get it every time they want or need to. In order to get used to it yourself, you must start by doing something very simple. Tonight, in your dreams, you must look at your hands."

Not much more was said about this in the awareness of our daily world. In my recollection of my experiences in the second attention, however, I found out that we had a more extensive exchange. For instance, I expressed my feelings about the absurdity of the task, and don Juan suggested that I should face it in terms of a quest that was entertaining, instead of solemn and morbid.

'Get as heavy as you want when we talk about dreaming," he said. "Explanations always call for deep thought. But when you actually dream, be as light as a feather. Dreaming has to be performed with integrity and seriousness, but in the midst of laughter and with the confidence of someone who doesn't have a worry in the world. Only under these conditions can our dreams actually be turned into dreaming."

Don Juan assured me that he had selected my hands arbitrarily as something to look for in my dreams and that looking for anything else was just as valid. The goal of the exercise was not finding a specific thing but engaging my dreaming attention.

Don Juan described the dreaming attention as the control one acquires over one's dreams upon fixating the assemblage point on any new position to which it has been displaced during dreams. In more general terms, he called the dreaming attention an incomprehensible facet of awareness that exists by itself, waiting for a moment when we would entice it, a moment when we would give it purpose; it is a veiled faculty that every one of us has in reserve but never has the opportunity to use in everyday life.

My first attempts at looking for my hands in my dreams were a fiasco. After months of unsuccessful efforts, I gave up and complained to don Juan again about the absurdity of such a task. "There are seven gates," he said as a way of answering, "and dreamers have to open all seven of them, one at the time. You're up against the first gate that must be opened if you are to dream."

"Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"It would've been useless to tell you about the gates of dreaming before you smacked your head against the first one. Now you know that it is an obstacle and that you have to overcome it."

Don Juan explained that there are entrances and exits in the energy flow of the universe and that, in the specific case of dreaming, there are seven entrances, experienced as obstacles, which sorcerers call the seven gates of dreaming.

"The first gate is a threshold we must cross by becoming aware of a particular sensation before deep sleep," he said. "A sensation which is like a pleasant heaviness that doesn't let us open our eyes. We reach that gate the instant we become aware that we're falling asleep, suspended in darkness and heaviness."

"How do I become aware that I am falling asleep? Are there any steps to follow?"

"No. There are no steps to follow. One just intends to become aware of falling asleep."

"But how does one intend to become aware of it?"

"Intent or intending is something very difficult to talk about. I or anyone else would sound idiotic trying to explain it. Bear that in mind when you hear what I have to say next: sorcerers intend anything they set themselves to intend, simply by intending it."

"That doesn't mean anything, don Juan."

"Pay close attention. Someday it'll be your turn to explain. The statement seems nonsensical because you are not putting it in the proper context. Like any rational man, you think that understanding is exclusively the realm of our reason, of our mind.

"For sorcerers, because the statement I made pertains to intent and intending, understanding it pertains to the realm of energy. Sorcerers believe that if one would intend that statement for the energy body, the energy body would understand it in terms entirely different from those of the mind. The trick is to reach the energy body. For that you need energy."

"In what terms would the energy body understand that statement, don Juan?"

"In terms of a bodily feeling, which it's hard to describe. You'll have to experience it to know what I mean."

I wanted a more precise explanation, but don Juan slapped my back and made me enter into the second attention. At that time, what he did was still utterly mysterious to me. I could have sworn that his touch hypnotized me. I believed he had instantaneously put me to sleep, and I dreamt that I found myself walking with him on a wide avenue lined with trees in some unknown city. It was such a vivid dream, and I was so aware of everything, that I immediately tried to orient myself by reading signs and looking at people. It definitely was not an English- or Spanish-speaking city, but it was a Western city. The people seemed to be northern Europeans, perhaps Lithuanians. I became absorbed in trying to read billboards and street signs.

Don Juan nudged me gently. "Don't bother with that," he said. "We are nowhere identifiable. I've just lent you my energy so you would reach your energy body, and with it you've just crossed into another world. This won't last long, so use your time wisely.

"Look at everything, but without being obvious. Don't let anyone notice you."

We walked in silence. It was a block-long walk, which had a remarkable effect on me. The more we walked, the greater my sensation of visceral anxiety. My mind was curious, but my body was alarmed. I had the clearest understanding that I was not in this world. When we got to an intersection and stopped walking, I saw that the trees on the street had been carefully trimmed. They were short trees with hard-looking, curled leaves. Each tree had a big square space for watering. There were no weeds or trash in those spaces, as one would find around trees in the city, only charcoal black, loose dirt.

The moment I focused my eyes on the curb, before I stepped off it to cross the street, I noticed that there were no cars. I tried desperately to watch the people who milled around us, to discover something about them that would explain my anxiety. As I stared at them, they stared back at me. In one instant a circle of hard blue and brown eyes had formed around us. A certainty hit me like a blow: this was not a dream at all; we were in a reality beyond what I know to be real. I turned to face don Juan. I was about to realize what was different about those

people, but a strange dry wind that went directly to my sinuses hit my face, blurred my view, and made me forget what I wanted to tell don Juan. The next instant, I was back where I had started from: don Juan's house. I was lying on a straw mat, curled up on my side.

"I lent you my energy, and you reached your energy body," don Juan said matter-of-factly. I heard him talk, but I was numb. An unusual itching on my solar plexus kept my breaths short and painful. I knew that I had been on the verge of finding something transcendental about dreaming and about the people I had seen, yet I could not bring whatever I knew into focus.

"Where were we, don Juan?" I asked. "Was it all a dream? A hypnotic state?"

"It wasn't a dream," he replied. "It was dreaming. I helped you reach the second attention so

that you would understand intending as a subject not for your reason but for your energy body.

"At this point, you can't yet comprehend the import of all this, not only because you don't have sufficient energy but because you're not intending anything. If you were, your energy body would comprehend immediately that the only way to intend is by focusing your intent on whatever you want to intend. This time I focused it for you on reaching your energy body."

"Is the goal of dreaming to intend the energy body?" I asked, suddenly empowered by some strange reasoning.

"One can certainly put it that way," he said. "In this particular instance, since we're talking about the first gate of dreaming, the goal of dreaming is to intend that your energy body becomes aware that you are falling asleep. Don't try to force yourself to be aware of falling asleep. Let your energy body do it. To intend is to wish without wishing, to do without doing. "Accept the challenge of intending," he went on. "Put your silent determination, without a single thought, into convincing yourself that you have reached your energy body and that you are a dreamer. Doing this will automatically put you in the position to be aware that you are falling asleep."

"How can I convince myself that I am a dreamer when I am not?"

"When you hear that you have to convince yourself, you automatically become more rational. How can you convince yourself you are a dreamer when you know you are not? Intending is both: the act of convincing yourself you are indeed a dreamer, although you have never dreamt before, and the act of being convinced."

"Do you mean I have to tell myself I am a dreamer and try my best to believe it? Is that it?"

"No, it isn't. Intending is much simpler and, at the same time, infinitely more complex than that. It requires imagination, discipline, and purpose. In this case, to intend means that you get an unquestionable bodily knowledge that you are a dreamer. You feel you are a dreamer with all the cells of your body."

Don Juan added in a joking tone that he did not have sufficient energy to make me another loan for intending and that the thing to do was to reach my energy body on my own. He assured me that intending the first gate of dreaming was one of the means discovered by the sorcerers of antiquity for reaching the second attention and the energy body.

After telling me this, he practically threw me out of his house, commanding me not to come back until I had intended the first gate of dreaming.

I returned home, and every night for months I went to sleep intending with all my might to become aware that I was falling asleep and to see my hands in my dreams. The other part of the task-to convince myself that I was a dreamer and that I had reached my energy body-was totally impossible for me.

Then, one afternoon while taking a nap, I dreamt I was looking at my hands. The shock was enough to wake me up. It proved to be a unique dream that could not be repeated. Weeks went by, and I was unable either to become aware that I was falling asleep or to find my hands. I began to notice, however, that I was having in my dreams a vague feeling that there was something I should have been doing but could not remember. This feeling became so strong that it kept on waking me up at all hours of the night.

When I told don Juan about my futile attempts to cross the first gate of dreaming, he gave me some guidelines. "To ask a dreamer to find a determined item in his dreams is a subterfuge," he said. "The real issue is to become aware that one is falling asleep. And, strange as it may seem, that doesn't happen by commanding oneself to be aware that one is falling asleep but by sustaining the sight of whatever one is looking at in a dream."

He told me that dreamers take quick, deliberate glances at everything present in a dream. If they focus their dreaming attention on something specific, it is only as a point of departure. From there, dreamers move on to look at other items in the dream's content, returning to the point of departure as many times as possible.

After a great effort, I indeed found hands in my dreams, but they never were mine. They were hands that only seemed to belong to me, hands that changed shape, becoming quite night-marish at times. The rest of my dreams' content, nonetheless, was always pleasantly steady. I could almost sustain the view of anything I focused my attention on.

It went on like this for months, until one day when my capacity to dream changed seemingly by itself. I had done nothing special besides my constant earnest determination to be aware that I was falling asleep and to find my hands.

I dreamt I was visiting my hometown. Not that the town I was dreaming about looked at all like my hometown, but somehow I had the conviction that it was the place where I was born. It all began as an ordinary, yet very vivid dream. Then the light in the dream changed. Images became sharper. The street where I was walking became noticeably more real than a moment before. My feet began to hurt. I could feel that things were absurdly hard. For instance, on bumping into a door, not only did I experience pain on the knee that hit the door but I also was enraged by my clumsiness.

I realistically walked in that town until I was completely exhausted. I saw everything I could have seen had I been a tourist walking through the streets of a city. And there was no difference whatsoever between that dream walk and any walk I had actually taken on the streets of a city I visited for the first time.

"I think you went a bit too far," don Juan said after listening to my account. "All that was required was your awareness of falling asleep. What you've done is equivalent to bringing a wall down just to squash a mosquito sitting on it."

"Do you mean, don Juan, that I flubbed it?"

"No. But apparently you're trying to repeat something you did before. When I made your assemblage point shift and you and I ended up in that mysterious city, you were not asleep. You were dreaming, but not asleep, meaning that your assemblage point didn't reach that position through a normal dream. I forced it to shift.

"You certainly can reach the same position through dreaming, but I wouldn't advise you to do that at this time."

"Is it dangerous?"

"And how! Dreaming has to be a very sober affair. No false movement can be afforded. Dreaming is a process of awakening, of gaining control. Our dreaming attention must be systematically exercised, for it is the door to the second attention."

"What's the difference between the dreaming attention and the second attention?"

"The second attention is like an ocean, and the dreaming attention is like a river feeding into it. The second attention is the condition of being aware of total worlds, total like our world is total, while the dreaming attention is the condition of being aware of the items of our dreams."

He heavily stressed that the dreaming attention is the key to every movement in the sorcerers' world. He said that among the multitude of items in our dreams, there exist real energetic interferences, things that have been put in our dreams extraneously, by an alien force. To be able to find them and follow them is sorcery.

The emphasis he put on those statements was so pronounced that I had to ask him to explain them. He hesitated for a moment before answering.

"Dreams are, if not a door, a hatch into other worlds," he began. "As such, dreams are a two-

way street. Our awareness goes through that hatch into other realms, and those other realms send scouts into our dreams."

"What are those scouts?"

"Energy charges that get mixed with the items of our normal dreams. They are bursts of foreign energy that come into our dreams, and we interpret them as items familiar or unfamiliar to us."

"I am sorry, don Juan, but I can't make heads or tails out of your explanation."

"You can't because you're insisting on thinking about dreams in terms known to you: what occurs to us during sleep. And I am insisting on giving you another version: a hatch into other realms of perception. Through that hatch, currents of unfamiliar energy seep in. Then the mind or the brain or whatever takes those currents of energy and turns them into parts of our dreams."

He paused, obviously to give my mind time to take in what he was telling me. "Sorcerers are aware of those currents of foreign energy," he continued. "They notice them and strive to isolate them from the normal items of their dreams."

"Why do they isolate them, don Juan?"

"Because they come from other realms. If we follow them to their source, they serve us as guides into areas of such mystery that sorcerers shiver at the mere mention of such a possibility." "How do sorcerers isolate them from the normal items of their dreams?"

"By the exercise and control of their dreaming attention. At one moment, our dreaming attention discovers them among the items of a dream and focuses on them, then the total dream collapses, leaving only the foreign energy."

Don Juan refused to explain the topic any further. He went back to discussing my dreaming experience and said that, all in all, he had to take my dream as being my first genuine attempt at dreaming, and that this meant I had succeeded in reaching the first gate of dreaming.

During another discussion, at a different time, he abruptly brought up the subject again. He said, "I'm going to repeat what you must do in your dreams in order to pass the first gate of dreaming. First you must focus your gaze on anything of your choice as the starting point. Then shift your gaze to other items and look at them in brief glances. Focus your gaze on as many things as you can. Remember that if you glance only briefly, the images don't shift. Then go back to the item you first looked at."

"What does it mean to pass the first gate of dreaming?"

"We reach the first gate of dreaming by becoming aware that we are falling asleep, or by having, like you did, a gigantically real dream. Once we reach the gate, we must cross it by being able to sustain the sight of any item of our dreams."

"I can almost look steadily at the items of my dreams, but they dissipate too quickly."

"This is precisely what I am trying to tell you. In order to offset the evanescent quality of dreams, sorcerers have devised the use of the starting point item. Every time you isolate it and look at it, you get a surge of energy, so at the beginning don't look at too many things in your dreams. Four items will suffice. Later on, you may enlarge the scope until you can cover all you want, but as soon as the images begin to shift and you feel you are losing control, go back to your starting point item and start all over again."

"Do you believe that I really reached the first gate of dreaming, don Juan?"

"You did, and that's a lot. You'll find out, as you go along, how easy it'll be to do dreaming now."

I thought don Juan was either exaggerating or giving me incentive. But he assured me he was being on the level.

"The most astounding thing that happens to dreamers," he said, "is that, on reaching the first

gate, they also reach the energy body."

"What exactly is the energy body?"

"It's the counterpart of the physical body. A ghostlike configuration made of pure energy."

"But isn't the physical body also made out of energy?"

"Of course it is. The difference is that the energy body has only appearance but no mass. Since it's pure energy, it can perform acts that are beyond the possibilities of the physical body."

"Such as what for example, don Juan?"

"Such as transporting itself in one instant to the ends of the universe. And dreaming is the art of tempering the energy body, of making it supple and coherent by gradually exercising it."

"Through dreaming we condense the energy body until it's a unit capable of perceiving. Its perception, although affected by our normal way of perceiving the daily world, is an independent perception. It has its own sphere."

"What is that sphere, don Juan?"

"Energy. The energy body deals with energy in terms of energy. There are three ways in which it deals with energy in dreaming: it can perceive energy as it flows, or it can use energy to boost itself like a rocket into unexpected areas, or it can perceive as we ordinarily perceive the world."

"What does it mean to perceive energy as it flows?"

"It means to *see*. It means that the energy body *sees* energy directly as a light or as a vibrating current of sorts or as a disturbance. Or it feels it directly as a jolt or as a sensation that can even be pain."

"What about the other way you talked about, don Juan? The energy body using energy as a boost."

"Since energy is its sphere, it is no problem for the energy body to use currents of energy that exist in the universe to propel itself. All it has to do is isolate them, and off it goes with them."

He stopped talking and seemed to be undecided, as if he wanted to add something but was not sure about it. He smiled at me, and, just as I was beginning to ask him a question, he continued his explanation.

"I've mentioned to you before that sorcerers isolate in their dreams scouts from other realms," he said. "Their energy bodies do that. They recognize energy and go for it. But it isn't desirable for dreamers to indulge in searching for scouts. I was reluctant to tell you about it, because of the facility with which one can get swayed by that search."

Don Juan then quickly went on to another subject. He carefully outlined for me an entire block of practices. At the time, I found that on one level it was all incomprehensible to me, yet on another it was perfectly logical and understandable. He reiterated that reaching, with deliberate control, the first gate of dreaming is a way of arriving at the energy body. But to maintain that gain is predicated on energy alone. Sorcerers get that energy by redeploying, in a more intelligent manner, the energy they have and use for perceiving the daily world.

When I urged don Juan to explain it more clearly, he added that we all have a determined quantity of basic energy. That quantity is all the energy we have, and we use all of it for perceiving and dealing with our engulfing world. He repeated various times, to emphasize it, that there is no more energy for us anywhere and, since our available energy is already engaged,

there is not a single bit left in us for any extraordinary perception, such as dreaming. "Where does that leave us?" I asked.

"It leaves us to scrounge energy for ourselves, wherever we can find it," he replied.

Don Juan explained that sorcerers have a scrounging method. They intelligently redeploy their energy by cutting down anything they consider superfluous in their lives. They call this method the sorcerers' way. In essence, the sorcerers' way, as don Juan put it, is a chain of behavioral choices for dealing with the world, choices much more intelligent than those our progenitors taught us. These sorcerers' choices are designed to revamp our lives by altering our basic reactions about being alive. "What are those basic reactions?" I asked. "There are two ways of facing our being alive," he said. "One is to surrender to it, either by acquiescing to its demands or by fighting those demands. The other is by molding our particular life situation to fit our own configurations." "Can we really mold our life situation, don Juan?" "One's particular life situation can be molded to fit one's, specifications," don Juan insisted. "Dreamers do that. A wild statement? Not really, if you consider how little we know about ourselves."

He said that his interest, as a teacher, was to get me thoroughly involved with the themes of life and being alive; that is to say, with the difference between life, as a consequence of biological forces, and the act of being alive, as a matter of cognition.

"When sorcerers talk about molding one's life situation," don Juan explained, "they mean molding the awareness of being alive. Through molding this awareness, we can get enough energy to reach and sustain the energy body, and with it we can certainly mold the total direction and consequences of our lives."

Don Juan ended our conversation about dreaming admonishing me not merely to think about what he had told me but to turn his concepts into a viable way of life by a process of repetition. He claimed that everything new in our lives, such as the sorcerers' concepts he was teaching me, must be repeated to us to the point of exhaustion before we open ourselves to it. He pointed out that repetition is the way our progenitors socialized us to function in the daily world.

As I continued my dreaming practices, I gained the capability of being thoroughly aware that I was falling asleep as well as the capability of stopping in a dream to examine at will anything that was part of that dream's content. To experience this was for me no less than miraculous.

Don Juan stated that as we tighten the control over our dreams, we tighten the mastery over our dreaming attention. He was right in saying that the dreaming attention comes into play when it is called, when it is given a purpose. Its coming into play is not really a process, as one would normally understand a process: an ongoing system of operations or a series of actions or functions that bring about an end result. It is rather an awakening. Something dormant becomes suddenly functional.

THE SECOND GATE OF DREAMING

ound out by means of my dreaming practices that a dreaming teacher must create a didactic synthesis in order to emphasize a given point. In essence, what don Juan wanted with my first task was to exercise my dreaming attention by focusing it on the items of my dreams. To this effect he used as a spearhead the idea of being aware of falling asleep. His subterfuge was to say that the only way to be aware of falling asleep is to examine the elements of one's dreams.

I realized, almost as soon as I had begun my dreaming practices, that exercising the dreaming attention is the essential Point in dreaming. To the mind, however, it seems impossible